

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Avoiding Self-Righteousness

(Jerry Fite)

Paul earnestly desired and prayed for the salvation of his Jewish brethren. He saw a barrier: *“being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit themselves to the righteousness of God”* (Romans 10:3). In most people, the desire to be “right” is strong. However, one can fall into the trap of “self-righteousness” and lose their soul. Salvation will only be realized by those who submit to “God’s righteousness” and avoid the barrier of “self-righteousness.” Seeing the importance of “righteousness” in our salvation, let us observe some ways we can avoid soul-damning “self-righteousness.”

First we must overcome “ignorance.” Paul saw this as a problem among his fellow Jews. They were ignorant of God’s standard for righteousness. We must examine the gospel of Christ to find such righteousness. Paul says that in the Gospel is where we find *“the righteousness of God”* (Romans 1:17). And Paul declares, *“For Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness to everyone that believeth”* (Romans 10:4). Paul desired to *“be found in Him, not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but which is through*

faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith” (Philippians 3:9). The Jews, being satisfied with the Law, needed to look at Christ who fulfilled the law and offers God’s righteousness to everyone who believes in Him.

Belief in Christ is not only a matter of being taught the Gospel, but it demands the submission of the “will.” This is a barrier which Paul saw in the Jews. They refused to *“subject themselves to the righteousness of God”* (Romans 10:3). Having the *humility* to desire “God’s will” instead of our own will help us overcome the barrier of “self-righteousness”. When we are exposed to the truth of God’s righteousness through Christ, we must be willing to submit ourselves to Him. He is the way, the truth and the life and the only way to the Father (John 14:6). The humility to acknowledge this fact and be willing to subject ourselves to him in faith will go a long way in avoiding self-righteousness.

We must avoid the tendency to stop short of God’s righteousness and settle for our own, or establish our own by going beyond God’s standard for righteousness. Both miss the mark.

Loving our neighbor as ourselves is a clear demand of God (Matthew 22:39). However, in Luke 10, a man wants to water down its demand. *“He, desiring to justify himself, said unto Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor’”* (Luke 10: 29). Jesus’ response with the story of the “Good Samaritan” leads us to believe that this man loved his neighbor as long as his neighbor was a fellow Jew. With the story, Jesus teaches us that our neighbor goes beyond such a narrow view. It is anyone who needs our help.

Paul warned some who were being *“severe to the body.”* Some abstained from certain foods and marriage and appeared righteous. In reality they were engaged in *“will worship”* and were *“falling away from the faith”* Their abstaining had no value against the indulgence of the flesh” (Colossians 2:21-23, 1 Timothy 4:3). In demanding men to abstain from certain food and marriage, they were going beyond God’s teaching in the Gospel. In seeking to establish their own righteousness, they were falling short of God’s righteousness. Avoid subtracting from or going beyond God’s Word, and you will find God’s righteousness.